

The Planning Network



SLO County's Clean Energy Financing Program

By Chuck Stevenson

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The Planning and Building Department's Mission Statement:

Promoting the Wise Use of Land

Helping to Build Great Communities

San Luis Obispo County has officially joined 13 other California counties and approximately 76 cities that will participate in an energy efficiency incentive program called CaliforniaFIRST. Six of the cities within the county have also joined this pilot program. CaliforniaFIRST is a statewide government coalition organized by the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. This program will help further Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's goals for improving energy efficiency by at least 30% across the State in approximately 13 million existing older homes.

The California State Legislature passed AB 811 in 2008 to enable voluntary property-based financing for energy-saving improvements. This program allows an owner of residential, commercial or industrial property to make major energy efficiency investments and put the cost on to the property tax bill as a special assessment. The program eliminates the chief barrier to clean energy installations: the large upfront cost. Once a property owner is approved for financing, the cost of installing improvements will be added to property tax bills and amortized over 10 to 20 years.

CaliforniaFIRST is a form of financing energy improvements commonly known as a "Property Assessed Clean Energy" or "PACE" program. Work is currently underway among the participating pilot counties and cities in order to roll out the program this coming summer.

Property owner benefits include:

- Only those property owners who choose to participate in the program will have property tax assessments applied.
- In today's economic environment, there may not be attractive alternatives for property owners to finance renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements.
- By virtue of a large, statewide, pool of participating property owners, small projects, both residential and commercial, can have access to the municipal bond market, which may produce a lower borrowing cost
- Under the CaliforniaFIRST Program, the assessment obligation will transfer with the property upon sale. Most private loans are due when the property sells.
- The property owner can choose to pay off the assessments at any time, subject to possible prepayment penalties.

From both an environmental and economic perspective, PACE programs will serve as an integral component of the national "Recovery Through Retrofit" initiative, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support "green job" growth.

Interested property owners will be able to apply for the program as early as this coming summer 2010. Please check back later on the Planning and Building Department's web site, www.sloplanning.org, for more detailed information as it becomes available.

We're on the web!
WWW.SLOPLANNING.ORG

Meet the Staff — David Bridges

Every quarter, a different staff member will be featured.



My name is Dave Bridges, and I work for the Planning and Building Department as a Building Inspector. As one of the new kids on the block (3 ½ years), I do not have much history with the County to share. However, the path to this point has been varied and most of the experiences have combined to help in my current duties.

Born in Missouri during the baby boom, I am part of what is currently being referred to as the “Silver Tsunami.” My family moved to California in 1958 and ultimately settled in the San Joaquin Valley. I grew up in the small town of McFarland graduating from the local high school. From there, it was on to Pepperdine for my college years and then to Portland, OR where the journey that would ultimately lead me into the construction field began.

A local savings and loan was hiring management trainees and offered me a position. That process would take me into real estate appraising—a position that I would stay in until moving to Bakersfield to work for Santa Barbara Savings and Loan. I was responsible for new construction activities and maintained that position until the recession in the late 70’s brought my affiliation with them to a close.

From there I went directly into the construction trades, obtaining my Contractor’s license in 1979. For the next 20 years, I repaired or replaced just about anything there was in a house. For you trivia buffs, on one occasion I was hired to work on Buck Owens’ place and even tried to help him jump start his old pa-

rade Cadillac (the one with the steer horns hood ornament). I say “tried”—we soon realized that he had a 6 volt system, so... called the local garage. That brief association eventually led to another small job when he built the Crystal Palace corbels for the front façade that you can see from the freeway if you go slow enough and know where to look.

In 1999, it was time to consider working more with my brain than my brawn, and thus, I pursued work in the teaching field. However, my wife and I soon determined that if we were ever to build our own house, it was time to pull the trigger.

We had purchased 10 acres of land in North County in 1997, and so the process began. For the next two years, my full time job was planning and building our house. It was a hands-on project from concrete to cabinets and was completed without any broken bones. The project provided me with an excellent insight into the County’s procedures and requirements and would ultimately open the door to the position that I currently hold.

On a personal note, my wife Betty and I have been married for 16 years, have 6 kids, 9 grand kids and 2 great grand kids between us in a “With 6 You Get Eggroll” sort of way. We also have one adopted cat-a stray that came to the door, insisted that we should take care of her and, after a short battle of wits, the cat won. So far, one mouse and one gopher is all that she has to her credit for earning her keep! Hobbies (for me, not the cat) include woodworking and doing a frame off restoration on a 1965 GTO. Thanks for tuning in.



Post a Comment

Planning Commission agendas contain a new feature enabling you to post comments about upcoming agenda items. This feature is called "Post a Comment". It appears after each agenda item. When you open the Post a Comment link you are given choices on whether you oppose, support, or would like to comment about an item. This information is then forwarded to the commissioners, and project managers to help staff address and understand the concerns of the community.

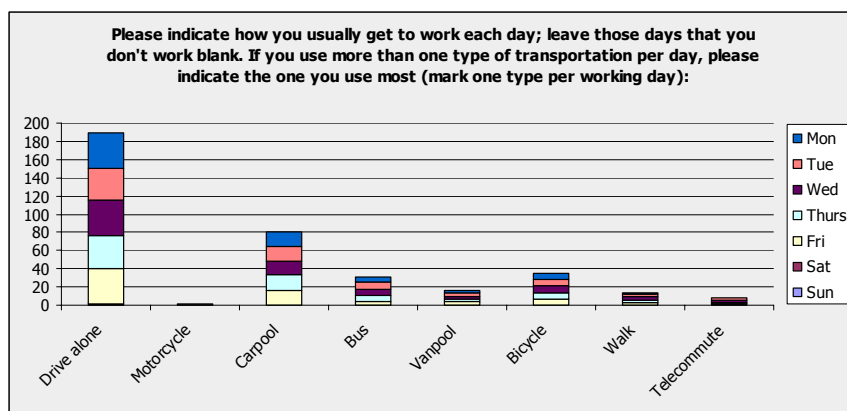
We are looking forward to adding this feature to our Planning Department Hearing agendas in the future depending upon the popularity of the form on Planning Commission agendas. Please encourage the folks out there to use this form of commenting on upcoming items. And, as always please feel free to make suggestions on ways we can make our systems even more useful than they are now. Thank you!



Reducing Our Commute

During the month of September 2009, SLO Regional Rideshare conducted a survey of the employees in the County Planning and Building Department to determine commute habits and attitudes. A presentation to the Department was made by Morgen Marshall from Regional Rideshare at our All Hands meeting in October.

On average, 56% of the employees surveyed drive their car alone to work while the most popular method of alternative transportation is carpool at 28%. Of those that carpool, 72.7% do so with one other person and the remaining 18.2% carpool with two others.



It can be determined from the survey that employees at the County Planning and Building Department already use alternative transportation at least a few days per week (59%). The survey also found that more employees would use alternative transportation if service was more convenient and there were more incentives. The main obstacle identified through the survey is that driving alone offers more convenience and flexibility, particularly for those with children and after work activities.

If you want more information about alternative transportation and incentives for participating alternative transportation, you can contact one of our Department's two employee transportation coordinators, Jennifer Jimenez or Chris Macek.



This St. Patrick's Day...
DON'T JUST WEAR GREEN - BE GREEN

How Does the Conservation and Open Space Element Relate to Energy?

By James Caruso



The Planning and Building Department is updating the 35-year-old Conservation Element (COSE) of the County General Plan. The COSE is made up of nine chapters, each dealing with a resource such as air quality, biological resources and energy resources. In addition to the update, the five following General Plan Elements were combined into the new COSE: Conservation Element, Esthetic Element, Historic Element, Open Space Element and the Energy Element.

The Energy Element was prepared in 1995 and has withstood the test of time. It includes policies addressing such 21st century issues as strategic growth, alternative transportation, building and energy efficiency, and renewable energy.

The Energy Chapter focuses on promoting the use of renewable energy. It proposes identifying areas of the county which are best suited to renewable energy such as wind and solar power. These energy resources would be the best use of these mapped areas and would be protected from incompatible uses.

The 2010 updated and consolidated COSE continues to address important energy policies and addresses these new 21st century policy efforts as well:

- Develop a property-based, energy-efficiency financing district that will offer low-cost loans to property owners for upgrading the energy efficiency of existing structures.
- Establish a renewable energy portfolio that takes advantage of locally-available, renewable energy resources.
- Develop efficiency measures that will lead to a 20% reduction in energy consumption at County facilities.
- Identify and remove regulatory barriers to alternative energy development.
- Encourage both distributed energy and commercial solar project development.

The Board of Supervisors will begin consideration of the Planning Commission's draft COSE in February 2010, with further hearings occurring in March. The County will soon have a new energy policy direction suitable for the 21st century.

What's New With Stormwater Planning?

By Elizabeth Szwabowski

Much has happened recently to address storm water compliance. In the county, four important milestones have taken place:

- ◆ In-house training for building inspectors on how to perform erosion & sedimentation control inspections.
- ◆ Joint training (including field training) for County staff including Public Works and other agency representatives was held regarding storm water compliance.
- ◆ Hydromodification was introduced.

Last summer, the Building Division began training building inspectors on the proper installation of best management practices for erosion and sedimentation control. Inspectors were also trained to educate builders, owners and applicants on being prepared for stormwater compliance on construction site runoff during the rainy season which officially began October 15. In October 2009, routine erosion and sedimentation control inspections began on active permits.

On October 30, 2009, the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Resource Conservation District (RCD), and the County held a joint agency training on storm water compliance. Guest speakers included Brent Hallock, PhD, Cal Poly professor in Soil Science, Erosion Control Specialist; Susan Litteral, P.E., Engineer, NRCS, and Don Funk, CPESC, Executive Director RCD.

Seventy-three people consisting of County staff, professionals, contractors and other agencies attended. As a follow-up to the classroom presentation, we visited a site near San Luis Bay Drive. Thanks go to the property owner for allowing our group to visit the site for a brief training, (photo).

The local Regional Water Quality Control Board requested that local jurisdictions amend their Stormwater Management Plans to include a new best management practice, titled "hydromodification." Due to this costly effort, instead of each jurisdiction performing this task individually, an opportunity to participate in a joint effort was offered to the County and Cities. Our County agreed to participate in the joint effort. For more information, www.waterboards.ca.gov, type in "joint effort".

So what is hydromodification (hydromod)? Essentially, hydromodification deals with changes in the volume, speed, or timing of high and low flows in a water body, generally a stream or river. Too much runoff can lead to stream damage and flooding if not addressed. One way to reduce stream damage is through reducing the amount of stormwater runoff from sites. There are many ways to do this and the general term used to describe these methods is called Low Impact Design (LID). The goal of LID is to mimic a pre-site development hydrologic condition. Some ways to mimic pre-development hydrology is by installation of some of the following: rain gardens, grow native and drought tolerant plants, trees, permeable pavement, and rain water harvesting. Over the next two years, we encourage all stakeholders to participate in the joint effort especially the building community.



The County's Climate Action Plan

The County Department of Planning and Building will begin preparing a Climate Action Plan (CAP) in February 2010. Climate Action Plans are used to address the local actions needed to combat global climate change. The State of California has led the nation in efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG), such as carbon dioxide. While State and Federal efforts are needed, local jurisdictions like Cities and Counties can do their part too.

CAP's focus will be twofold: reduction in emissions of greenhouse gases and increasing energy efficiency in buildings, industry and transportation. Energy efficiency is key to reducing GHG, because more efficient buildings and transportation choices reduces the use of fossil fuels which is a leading cause of climate change. Substituting solar power for natural gas and other forms of electricity production will lower power bills and reduce the need to build new, expensive power plants.

The County's CAP program will start with a rigorous public education and outreach process so that the public's acceptance and support of climate change policies can be assessed. The policies and strategies that make it through the process will be analyzed for their GHG reduction potential. The goal of CAP is to include those measures that will reduce GHG the most at the least cost. The cost-benefit analysis will identify those measures which are most cost-effective.

Improve Energy Efficiency at Home

By Steve Hicks

Assuming you're living in an existing home, not building a new one, here are ways to improve energy efficiency in your home. I will start with the simple (free) and get progressively more complex (not free).

- Let's start with the easy and obvious, remembering what your mom said, "TURN OFF THE LIGHTS!!!", and "SHUT THE DOOR OR WINDOW!!!" You can save energy and money by turning the thermostat down during cold weather and up during hot weather. You may want to dress appropriately for comfort, though. Shut the registers and close the doors in rooms you don't use. Close curtains to keep heat in at night and open them to let the sun warm your house during the day.

Now the following things might cost a little money and sweat equity (effort on your part):

- Change your air filter to your forced air unit, or air conditioner. It's a good bet that if you have never done this, it is going to be really dirty and wasting a lot of energy.
- The duct work of your heating or cooling system is usually as leaky as a sieve. If you can, get under the attic or under your house and look at the joints in the air ducts. If they have come apart, you are heating or cooling your attic or underfloor space – fix them, and, if the insulation around them is dirty, the joints are leaking and should be sealed with duct sealant.
- It helps to remove the registers and seal the space between the sheet metal and the drywall.
- Check your attic access door or hatch. Insulate it if possible.
- Buy a programmable thermostat.
- Weather stripping never lasts forever and it's a good bet yours is worn out and needs to be replaced. This is just like leaving the window open. Redo

the weather stripping around all the doors to the exterior and any other opening that needs it.

- Replace that old pet door while you're at it with a new one that is less leaky.
- Check your water heater. If your hot water is always burning your hands you might be able to turn it down a little. Make sure you measure the temperature and keep it hot enough to run the dishwasher properly.
- Insulate your hot water pipes and the cold water pipes coming out of your water heater.
- If you want to save water and energy look into getting a hot water recirculation system that turns itself on only when you need to use the hot water.
- You can look into a tankless on demand hot water system, but do your research homework on that one before you buy. They usually require a much larger gas line, and if your house is spread out, they usually won't pencil out as saving you anything.
- Change out your light bulbs to fluorescent or L.E.D.s.
- Get dimmers or occupancy sensors.
- Unplug all those chargers that just sit on the wall plug or plug strip. Go ahead, feel them and see how warm they are when they aren't even charging anything – wasted energy. If you can, group them all on a plug strip that has a switch on it and when it is not being used, flip the switch. Put those TVs and stereos and DVDs that you don't use every day on a plug strip and flip the switch off.
- Have you ever left your pretty ornamental gas fireplace on all night? They make new controls for them with push buttons for one to four hours.
- Retrofit those leaky old windows with new dual glazed energy efficient ones. There is even a tax credit

for those. Look into ones that do more shading if you have high AC bills.

- Do you have an old house with no insulation in the walls? Pump it in. You will notice an immediate difference. Get up in the attic and measure your insulation. R-30 is the new standard and that means at least 10" of blown in or 9-1/2" batt insulation. Once again, the energy tax credit can be applied to this. You get to take your hard earned money back from the government and save energy at the same time.
- Replace those old energy hog appliances with the new energy star ones.
- There is always the option of adding photovoltaic solar cells on your roof and usually lowering your electricity bills by about half. It is costly but makes a very good green statement. With solar, consider putting timers on some appliances so they only come on only when you are making electricity (daylight).

The gas and electric company put out a lot of information about saving energy. If you want to know more please see <http://www.socalgas.com/energyefficiency/home.html> for gas and <http://www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergymoney/savingtips/> for electricity.



Sustainable Agriculture

By Terry Wahler

Sustainable agriculture. Sounds good, but what is it exactly? How does sustainable agriculture differ from regular agriculture? Sustainable agriculture is best defined as agriculture that produces sufficient quantities of food to feed a hungry world without depleting the earth's finite resources, polluting the environment, impoverishing people in other countries or creating unjust social conditions in our own. Sustainable agricultural methods should use natural systems as a guide for raising crops and livestock since natural systems are generally in balance and thus self sustaining.

At the center of the sustainable agriculture phenomenon is, of course, energy. Incredible amounts of energy are used daily just in California to pump water, till fields, cool barns, and process agricultural products. Increasingly, agriculturists are turning away from petroleum-based agricultural practices and toward alternative energy sources to run their farms. Examples of different types of alternative energy sources include biofuels, solar, wind, hydroenergy and geothermal. The first three, biofuels, solar and wind energy, hold the most promise locally.

Biofuels range from the familiar methane derived from corn and soybeans to the more exotic and experimental algae-based fuel. Although the production of algae to harvest oil for biodiesel has not yet been undertaken on

a commercial scale, plant sourced- biodiesel production has been growing rapidly in recent years. Used on farms to fuel diesel engines to run farm equipment and pump water, this fuel source is expected to continue growing. It is often blended with petroleum-based diesel but can be used as pure vegetable oil if properly refined (B-100). Biodiesel can and is produced directly on farms but must be processed so that it meets standards for viscosity and purity.



Solar energy has many applications and technologies, but the most common use related to agriculture is solar electricity generation for pumping water, heating and cooling. Solar panels are especially appropriate for pumping water to feed livestock in remote areas where no power lines exist.

Windmills have been used to pump water from wells since early times. We are all familiar with the iconic windmill pumping water into the large water trough on a cattle ranch. Locally, windmills are still used to pump water, but less so on a small scale to generate electricity.

California ranchers have developed a program called "The Ranching Sustainability Self-Assessment Project" which includes an energy efficiency section advocating alternative energy sources. A local wine industry group, the Central Coast Vineyard Team, advocates sustainable agriculture through its *Sustainability In Practice* (SIP) program. To be a part of this program, growers are required to evaluate and document their energy consumption and encouraged to use alternative energy technologies such as solar and wind.

Since water pumping costs are such a large part of the energy cost of agriculture, Pacific Gas and Electric Company is involved in a pump efficiency program to help assess pump efficiency and encourage more efficient technologies and methods. The Santa Maria office of the Resource Conservation District has a mobile pump efficiency program to help agriculturists assess their pumps and distribution systems.

Alternative energy technologies hold great promise for greater energy independence nationally and as a viable component of an emerging, sustainable agricultural economy that is ecologically sound, economically viable, and socially responsible.

Energy Efficiency and the Conservation Block Grant Program

The County has been awarded a \$2,053,600 grant to use for energy efficiency and conservation projects. The funding is from the Department of Energy and is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The following projects will be funded with this grant:

Climate Action Plan (CAP)

CAP develops measures that can be used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency throughout the County. CAP focuses on four major sectors or activities: building energy use, sustainable transportation and land use, waste reduction and recycling and community outreach, and education and feedback.

Green Building Ordinance (GBO)

The Building Division, with the assistance of SLO Green Build, will develop a Green Building Ordinance for use in the County jurisdiction. The Ordinance will contain measures to increase energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and decrease other harmful environmental impacts. GBO will encourage the conservation of natural resources and sustainable building, reduce waste in landfills generated by construction projects, increase energy efficiency and lower energy usage by using alternate power, reduce the operations and maintenance cost of buildings through efficient insulation, and promote healthier indoor environments.

Templeton-Paso Robles Class II Bike Lane Construction

This project proposes to complete Class II bicycle lanes in Templeton along Main Street (800 feet north of Creekside Ranch Road) to Ramada Drive and also Theater Drive from Main Street

to the Paso Robles city limit, where private funds are not available. This project will fill in the gap in bicycle facilities between the communities of Templeton and Paso Robles. This is a primary connector segment and ranks high in the County Bikeways Plan.

County Building HVAC Retrofits

This project upgrades heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) units in 13 County facilities. The existing units have SEER ratings of 6.0-12.0, with the majority at 8.5 or less. It is proposed to replace the existing units with units rated 14.0 SEER or higher. Most units are 15 years of age or older and are nearing the end of their useful life. This project will reduce energy use, peak power demand, and greenhouse gases, especially in high demand periods.

County Building Interior and Exterior HVAC Retrofits

This project upgrades exterior lighting in 17 County facilities, as determined by energy audits. Improvements will replace exterior building and parking lot lighting with higher efficiency lighting systems. Parking lot lighting poles will be converted to LED lighting, T5 dual-level lighting, or downsized to metal halide lighting. Existing incandescent flood lamps on buildings will convert to metal halide or compact fluorescent depending upon the application.

This project also addresses interior lighting in multiple buildings based on energy audits. Improvements will replace incandescent lamps, T12 fluorescent lamps, and magnetic ballasts with more efficient lighting systems in buildings. It also proposes to replace existing high pressure sodium lamps with metal halide lamps one size smaller.

Updated Grading Ordinance Is In the Works

The Regional Water Quality Control Board approved the County's Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) and granted National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II permit coverage to the County on March 23, 2007. The County's SWMP consists of 56 tasks which need to be implemented over the next five years.

Numerous tasks are underway or have already been approved such as the Conservation and Open Space Element update, staff training, and the Illicit Discharge program. A high priority, and one that needs to complete by March 23, 2010, is a revised grading program.

On November 19, 2009, the Planning Commission recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve and adopt the Grading and Stormwater Management General Plan and ordinance revisions. Ordinance revisions include:

- Incorporate State-mandated, general construction permit standards (which limits stormwater discharges from construction sites) into local ordinances;
- Incorporate the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) post-construction design standards into local ordinances.
- Amend the "Agricultural Grading" section to more clearly define what is and is not exempt from grading permits or alternative review.

Public hearings are now underway at the Board of Supervisors. For more information go to www.sloplanning.org





Upcoming Events...

February 19—Energy for your Home and Business Workshop, Atascadero Lake Pavilion 8:30am - 2:00 pm, Admission is FREE

March 26—Grading and Erosion Control Water Quality Planning Short Course
1055 Monterey Rm 161, SLO 11:30 am to 4:30 pm

May 13—AEP presents Advanced CEQA Workshop, City/County Library
Contact Jeff Oliveira (805)781-4167

May 2010—Bike Month, "Life in the Bike Lane"

August 10—13 Coastal Commission coming to SLO

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Website News - sloplanning.org

Here's what's new on our website:

- Updated Permit and Parcel Lookup program - much easier to use
- We're on Facebook and Twitter - visit our website to become a fan
- New Long Range Planning page
- New Environmental Division page
- Enhanced search engine - use our "search" feature to find what you're looking for

f Facebook

Become a Fan



Did you know...

The San Luis Obispo County Seal was designed as a circle to depict early San Luis Obispo County History.

THE SHIP, BAY, AND MORRO ROCK:

The seal's ship, bay, and Morro Rock represent the early sea expedition and landing in San Luis Obispo County by Portuguese navigator, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo. In 1542, the Viceroy of Mexico dispatched Cabrillo to explore the coast of California. Sailing northward, Cabrillo entered the Bay of San Luis Obispo and called it the "Bay of Todos Santos," or All-Saints Bay. This was in the summer of 1542 and is the first instance of non-indigenous people appearing within the waters of this county or on its soil. Continuing his sail north, Cabrillo stopped and supplied his ships with wood and fresh water in "Los Esteros" where he discovered a bay containing a high, conical rock he called "El Moro". As the old pioneer explorer sailed northwest, he entered "Piedras Blancas" on his chart and anchored and landed in a bay he called the "Bay of Sardines" which we now know as San Simeon Bay.

ARCH AND BELL:

The seal's arch and bell represent a very significant portion of the mission chain built early as a means of occupation by Spain. San Luis Obispo County can be proud to have two well-preserved missions within the County. The string of Missions included the founding of the Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa September 1st, 1772, Mission at San Miguel established July 25, 1797, and early in the mission chain, the Mission at Santa Margarita. It, however, was only a branch Mission of the San Luis Obispo de Tolosa; and its use is little mentioned, except for a grainary for one of the large ranchos of the day.

FACES MAP:

The central design is an outline of the county boundary, centered with the faces of the seal's early explorers and inhabitants. First, the face of an indian, followed by the face of an early explorer, portraying both Cabrillo and/or Portolá. The face of the early padres and the mission influence is next. Last, the face of all those early Californians who came to settle this county and make it flourish, is illustrated.

1850:

The date - 1850 - under the word "Alcaldes" indicates the year this County was formed. In 1850, the legislature provided for the organization of the counties. On the first Monday of April, 1850, an election of the following County Officers was held: Clerk of the Supreme Court, District Attorney, County Judge (for each Judicial District), Clerk, Attorney, Surveyor, Sheriff, Recorder, Coroner, Assessor, and Treasurer. February 18, 1850, the State was divided into 27 counties. In April, one additional county was created. Thus, the State was divided into counties, and elections were held to elect the officers of County government. Thereby, County government was formed in 1850.

Read more about the history of the county seal in our next edition when we tell you about the Bear, Alcaldes, 10 stars, Mountain Peak, Valley, Hills and Oak Leaves.